

the community ever since. He opened his clinic in a predominately African American neighborhood, and was one of the first African American medical professionals to provide services to this underserved community.

In addition to his work in the medical field, Dr. Merritt has been a tireless advocate for his community. He is a past Exalted Ruler of the Pride of Fort Lauderdale Elks Lodge #652, as well as a Life Member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League, and the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. Dr. Merritt has also been a member of the Mount Hernon A.M.E. Church since 1964, where he has served as a Trustee.

None of these great achievements would have been possible without the love and support of Dr. Merritt's wife Rose Legon, who together raised two wonderful children, Dr. Pamela Merritt and Portia Mehaffey. They are also the proud grandparents of four lovely grandchildren, Courtney, Cierra, Darby, and Addison.

Mr. Speaker, to arrive at the great milestone of 85 years is no small thing. I am truly honored to share in this celebration of Dr. Merritt's many accomplishments and contributions. I wish him many more years of happiness and success.

RECOGNIZING THE WEST FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL'S LADY JAGUARS AS CLASS 4A STATE SOFTBALL CHAMPIONS

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2014

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to congratulate the First Congressional District of Florida's West Florida High School's girls softball team for winning the Class 4A State Championship. This victory marks the Lady Jaguars first ever state championship. West Florida High School ended their championship season with a record of 29–1, with a victory over P.K. Yonge High School on May 8, 2014 in the Class 4A State Championship Game.

Led by head coach Jessica Smith, pitching coach Angie Johnson, and assistant coach Gary Jackson, the Jaguars are a team of young women with tremendous persistence and passion. These attributes were on full display in the championship game when the Jaguars found themselves trailing by four runs and down to their last out in the 7th inning. Despite the long odds, the Jaguars refused to give up. A pivotal moment in the game occurred when the Navy's Blue Angels, home based at Pensacola Naval Air Station, could be seen flying over the field, which was located over 500 miles from Pensacola, in Vero Beach. As Coach Smith described, catching a glimpse of home both encouraged and sparked a special energy in the Jaguars, and they triumphed over P.K. Yonge with a score of 6 to 5.

Winning the state championship is a true testament to the hard work, ambition, and dedication of the West Florida High School girls softball team. Each team member is an invaluable asset to both the Lady Jaguars and the local community. To be honored with the

opportunity to bring home a state championship is a wonderful reflection of the team's commitment to Northwest Florida and to each other. I commend Korina Rosario, Kathleen Smiley, Jordaine Watkins, Nachele Watson, Ali Cutaio, Kristin Gunter, Emily Loring, Kayla Miller, Breana Rogers, Danyelle Black, Maegan Freeman, Jibrasha Moore, Farrah Nicholas, Lauren Carnley, Jasmyn Nguyen, and Ealon Pyle for challenging themselves as a team and setting a shining example of camaraderie and athleticism for their fellow students and youth in Pensacola.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United States Congress, it gives me great pleasure to recognize this outstanding group of young women and their devoted coaches for their extraordinary victory. My wife Vicki joins me in offering our best wishes to West Florida High School and its talented athletes for their continued personal and athletic success.

HONORING DR. AFAT I. MELEIS

HON. TOM MARINO

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2014

Mr. MARINO. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Dr. Afat I. Meleis, outgoing Dean of the University of Pennsylvania's School of Nursing. Dr. Meleis has served as Dean for 12 years, and will be truly missed by her students and colleagues.

Dr. Meleis assumed her role as Dean of the University of Pennsylvania School of nursing in 2002, and under her leadership, Penn Nursing is now regarded as one of the world's most regarded schools of nursing. Thanks to Dr. Meleis, Penn Nursing is now internationally renowned for their innovative research, teaching and practice and the School has established departments of Behavioral Health Sciences and Family and Community Health.

Dr. Meleis is internationally recognized for her work in nursing theory and her devotion to the health of women and girls. Dr. Meleis has intensified efforts to improve the health of women around the world by creating academic partnerships, and developing relationships with the United Nations and other international organizations dedicated to equity and well-being.

The first time I met her, my daughter Chloe and I had joined her for a CARE learning tour in West Africa, I was so overwhelmed by her compassion and dedication. Her expertise and brilliance are quickly made known to those around her, but it is her endless humanitarian work and advocacy for children which is most admirable. Her work as the Dean of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing, has elevated the program to what it is today: one of the leading nursing graduate schools in the world.

Although I have only known Dr. Meleis for a short time, she has made a tremendous impact in Chloe's and my life. I want to congratulate her on her long and successful tenure she has served as Dean. She has gone above her duty to ensure that the University of Pennsylvania, School of Nursing, is regarded as a top tier nursing program, and I wish her the best of luck in all of her future endeavors.

SHANNON MELENDI'S DEATH
STILL STINGS, 20 YEARS LATER

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2014

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, on previous occasions I have spoken about the loss of Shannon Melendi, a beautiful girl who attended my alma mater, Southwest Miami High School, and whose life was taken tragically as a teenager in 1994. As their Congresswoman and friend, I thank the Melendi Family for keeping us vigilant. I would like to share an eloquently written story about Shannon by Anne (Martinez) Vasquez, Associate Editor at the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, which was published by the newspaper on March 25, 2014:

SHANNON MELENDI'S DEATH STILL STINGS, 20 YEARS LATER

What I would give to relive those days of playing with our collection of cheap drug-store makeup sprawled on the bedroom floor as we plotted our outfits and gossiped about boys. Shannon Melendi and I became fast friends at the cusp of adolescence, when you dream of days still decades away and fantasize about chapters in your life you've yet to write.

Tears still sting my eyes when I think of the final chapter of Shannon's short life: At 19, a sophomore at Emory University, she disappeared on a Saturday afternoon after going on a lunch break from her part-time job as a scorekeeper at a softball field in suburban Atlanta.

The year was 1994, 20 years ago this week. It would be another painful 12 years before the man long suspected of kidnapping Shannon confessed.

Shannon's body was never found. There was no funeral, no official moment to mourn. Instead, the last 20 years have unfolded in surreal fashion, where life goes on for Shannon's closest family and friends even as we've struggled to fill in the blanks, a search for answers that never come.

Only now, as I reflect on the twists and turns of my life, do I realize the imprint that Shannon's story has left on my soul, a silent narrative that has molded my evolution as an adult and, ultimately, as a mother. The underlying lesson lingering in my subconsciousness: If evil can strike on a Saturday afternoon—snatching a smart 19-year-old with quick wit, the president of her high school senior class, an aspiring lawyer, a champion debater, the daughter of present and caring parents—it can happen to anyone, anywhere.

EVIL STRIKES

I woke up on Tuesday morning, March 29, 1994, with my father handing me a small clipping buried inside the Local section of The Miami Herald. I found the concerned look on my father's face puzzling, until I read the brief article, just a few lines long, saying Shannon's parents had flown to Atlanta after learning she had gone missing.

The rest of the week was a blur until I went to see Shannon's younger sister, Monique, who was staying with her aunt and grandparents. She turned 14 years old five days after Shannon disappeared, and I wanted to bring her a present. I sought to revisit happier times, when the Melendi family would invite me to join them on their vacations to the Florida Keys. Endless summer days where I first learned to water ski, jump waves and conquer my fear of treading open water.

In the weeks and months—even years—that followed, Shannon regularly paid me visits in my dreams. In many, I would replay our last chance encounter, which took place just a couple of weeks before Shannon disappeared.

A complete fluke, I had spotted Shannon among a sea of Spring Breakers in Daytona Beach, a rare place for either of us to visit. I walked in her direction until she came into clear focus. Yes, it was Shannon. For a few fleeting minutes, we laughed and reminisced. We caught up on where our college lives were taking us. We made plans to see each other a few weeks later when she would be back in Miami visiting her family. Then we hugged and went our separate ways.

It was the last time I saw Shannon. I didn't know it at the time, but it was my chance to say goodbye. She would be gone before the month came to a close.

FIGHTING THE MONSTER

As the years went by without word of what became of Shannon, my dreams began to reflect the anger I bottled deep inside.

In one recurring dream, it's late in the evening in some unnamed town in the middle of America. I walk into a restaurant for a bite. The room is dark and bustling with customers. I take a seat in a booth and see Shannon sitting across from her captor. Her hands are not tied, but she's not moving, not trying to escape. She's scared or drugged or both, I reason. I approach their table, see a spark of hope in Shannon's eyes and quickly find others who help me hold down the man who had stolen Shannon from her family. We pummel him. Shannon returns home.

My anger also manifested itself in other ways.

I made decisions determined not to cede power to the monster. I fought the fear that evil could lurk behind any corner.

I jumped at the chance to intern at The Boston Globe rather than spend the summer at a local paper. I walked to and from my apartment many late evenings holding a stun gun wrapped in a newspaper. Years later, as a reporter for The Miami Herald, I'd live and work in Sao Paulo, Brazil, for several months, riding the subway and making my way in another language in an unknown city five times the size of New York City.

I moved across the country to Northern California, where I worked and lived for seven years. A visit to Yosemite, on assignment in Mexico or vacationing in Vancouver, I'd imagine crossing paths with Shannon and putting an end to the tragic mystery.

ANGER TURNS INTO FEAR

Then I became a mother and the anger gave way to fear.

My firstborn was just shy of two years old when Colvin "Butch" Hinton III, a man with a history of harming young girls, confessed to kidnapping and murdering Shannon. Hinton, an umpire at the softball field where Shannon kept score, said he had set out to commit murder on March 26, 1994. He had targeted another woman but changed his plans when he spotted Shannon.

Hinton said he held Shannon at knifepoint, tied her up in his home, repeatedly raped her—in between catching a movie at a local theater in an effort to create an alibi—and ultimately strangled her in the early morning hours of March 27.

The unspeakable details resurfaced my dormant pain.

As my son's independence blossomed—and with that his ability to walk away from me at a department store or at a park—I found myself fighting a constant unease. I wanted—needed—to know where he was at every moment.

Most parents take their children to the park to relax, sit back and let their kids play. That will never be me.

I'll never forget spending one afternoon at a local water park with several of my son's friends. The other mothers positioned their chairs in the shallow water to chat and sunbathe. They didn't fuss, completely confident that their kids were safe. I stood the entire time, sloshing through the knee-high water to make sure my son emerged from the labyrinth of slides.

Dealing with my vigilant watch is a reality my children have learned to accept: My 9-year-old son understands why last summer I had him skip a field trip to the water park. My 4-year-old daughter recites to me how I shouldn't speak to strangers. I live in constant battle with myself, wrestling with a deep-seated desire to fuel my children's independence while also fighting a fear that harm may come their way.

Both of my children know, to varying degrees, Shannon's story. They know the world can be cruel, but they also exude a spirit of boundless optimism. They see themselves as the superheroes who can change the world.

I hope they do.

TIMELINE: THE SHANNON MELENDI MURDER

March 26, 1994: Shannon Melendi, a South Florida native and 19-year-old Emory University sophomore, vanishes on a Saturday afternoon from her part-time job as a scorekeeper at a softball field in suburban Atlanta.

March 27, 1994: Shannon's parents, Luis and Yvonne Melendi, get word that Shannon has been missing for more than 24 hours. They make arrangements to fly to Atlanta. In the ensuing weeks, volunteers and friends plaster streets with "MISSING" posters bearing Shannon's photo. Print and TV media in South Florida and Atlanta follow the story closely.

April 6, 1994: A caller to an Emory University hot line claims he is holding Shannon captive. As proof, the caller leaves a ring belonging to Shannon, enclosed in a bag, inside the pay phone where the call was made.

April 12, 1994: Police search the home of Colvin "Butch" Hinton III, an umpire at the softball field the day Shannon was last seen. Hinton has a criminal record of sexual assaults.

September 1994: A fire damages Hinton's home.

October 20, 1994: The Melendi family and friends of Shannon attend a vigil and press conference at Emory University on what would have been Shannon's 20th birthday. Luis and Yvonne Melendi keep Shannon's story alive in the local and national media for years to come.

March 26, 1995: Southwest 48th Street in Miami-Dade County is renamed Shannon Melendi Drive. The street runs in front of Southwest Miami Senior High School, where Shannon was class president and a prominent student.

June 1995: A federal grand jury indicts Hinton for arson, suggesting Hinton set fire to his home to collect insurance money.

January 1996: Hinton is convicted of arson and sent to federal prison.

December 2003: Hinton is released from federal prison.

August 2004: Authorities arrest Hinton, using a grand jury indictment that accuses Hinton of murdering Shannon Melendi.

September 2005: A jury convicts Hinton of murder. He is sentenced to life in prison.

June 2006: The Georgia Supreme Court upholds Hinton's conviction.

July 17, 2006: Hinton confesses to kidnapping, raping and murdering Shannon, after his appeal was denied.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2014

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, this is a National Small Business Week and I rise to recognize the contributions of small businesses in my congressional district and across the country.

With more than half of Americans either owning or working for a small business, it is clear these companies are a vital part of our nation's fabric.

Every day, small firms and their employees across every sector and industry are working to grow and become stronger.

When they do, we all benefit from their innovations, their job-creating power, and their ability to make the U.S. more competitive globally.

That why I support the Democratic agenda to help small businesses and entrepreneurs startup, grow, and create jobs.

"This includes supporting tax credits to help small businesses hire new employees; immigration reform, which will provide a solution for those businesses facing a maze of problems when hiring immigrant workers; and expanding financing options for entrepreneurs, especially in low- and moderate-income communities.

We must also oppose cuts to job training programs that help meet American businesses' workforce needs. Lastly, we must include working on a long-term extension of the Highway Trust Fund, which is critical for small construction firms across the nation.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses and entrepreneurs impact our lives every day and it is fitting that we recognize their contributions to the economy and our country during National Small Business Week.

Whether it is opening a new storefront, training workers, or sponsoring activities in our cities and towns, we have many reasons to thank small businesses.

This week we do so, and recognize these entrepreneurs not only for the contributions that they have already made, but also for their future work to strengthen our local communities.

In recognition of all that small businesses do for our communities, from providing conveniently located goods and services to sponsoring local events and organizations, I urge all Americans to take this opportunity to patronize the diverse businesses in their communities to demonstrate to them our continued appreciation and support.

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 18TH ANNUAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING WEEK IN ALAMEDA COUNTY

HON. ERIC SWALWELL

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2014

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 18th Annual Affordable Housing Week in Alameda County. Organized by East Bay Housing Organizations, a group of community leaders and affordable housing advocates, this period lasts